

**Subject: RE: Email**

**Date:** Wed, 27 Mar 2002 16:51:33 -0500

**From:** "GeneralManager, WLS-TV" <WLS-TV.GeneralManager@abc.com>

**To:** "jgel@ameritech.net" <jgel@ameritech.net>

Thank you for writing to share your concerns about the presentation of hockey fights on WLS-TV. The station endeavors to be sensitive to concerns about violent programming while still covering events of interest and importance to its viewers, and we will certainly keep your concerns and suggestions in mind as we cover such news in the future. However, we cannot agree that such incidents, and other incidents of violent conduct by athletes and other newsmakers, are never newsworthy or deserving of coverage. Moreover, we disagree with your suggestion that we include a warning in shows that contain footage of hockey fights.

We believe that most viewers are well aware that newscasts often include information about, and video of, unpleasant, disturbing and violent subjects such as war, crime, riots, natural disasters and terrorism as well as misconduct by athletes and other newsmakers. We also believe that our viewers understand that our coverage of these issues is not intended to encourage them to engage in similar behavior.

Indeed, the station is engaged in a continual effort to discourage violence through on-going public service campaigns and special news series and programming designed to foster increased understanding and tolerance.

While we certainly take your complaint seriously and do not wish to offend any of our viewers, we regret that we cannot comply with your suggestions. We will remain sensitive to the issue of sports-related violence and we appreciate your continued concern regarding our sportscasts.

Emily Barr  
President & General Manager  
ABC 7 Chicago

-----Original Message-----

From: jgel@ameritech.net [mailto:jgel@ameritech.net]

Sent: Tuesday, March 26, 2002 1:56 PM

To: GeneralManager, WLS-TV

Subject: Email

country = USA  
state = IL  
from = jgel@ameritech.net  
city = Willowbrook  
first\_name = Michael  
subj = Email  
Question = Dear Ms. Emily Barr:

I want you to see a complaint to the FCC that we are preparing, regarding ABC7's broadcasting of hockey fights on your sports news segment. We expect several hundred signatures on this letter. I am writing to you to state that we suggest a way to resolve the issue for your station. We site three ways to find an acceptable solution that meets community standards, and gives viewers an chance to avoid broadcasting of violent hockey fights by ABC7. Please read our complaint and let me know if you find any of these solutions practical for your station. If not, we of course, will forward the complaint to the FCC.

March 27, 2002

Federal Communications Commission  
Consumer Information Bureau  
Consumer Complaints  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, D.C.

CC: Emily Barr  
Station Manager  
WLS-TV Channel 7  
190 North State Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Dear Gentlemen and Ladies:

We the below signed viewers of WLS-TV Channel 7, located at 190 N. State Street, Chicago, Illinois, 60601, wish to complain about this station's repeated broadcasting of gratuitous hockey fights, during hours when younger children are likely to see such broadcasting.

Several complaints have been made to this station by phone calls and by e-mail messages, in an effort to get them to end their broadcasting of hockey violence in their sports news segments. Specifically, this station repeatedly broadcasts violent hockey fights, which if such acts were committed off the ice, would be criminal assaults. It is known that such fights are generally not discouraged by the owners of hockey teams, and for this reason, referees tend not to discourage fights by team members. Hockey fighting is common in the sport of professional hockey, and for this reason, it can not be considered news worthy. Other professional sports, such as football, basketball, etc, discourage fighting; therefore fighting during these sports contests would be newsworthy.

This station takes broadcasting of hockey fighting one step further, by presenting it as though it is somehow "cute" and acceptable. A clear example of this kind of presentation can be documented by their presentation by Mr. Mark Giengreco, news reporter, reporting on a hockey fight on March 12, 2002, during their at 5:00 and 6:00 p.m. sports broadcasts segments.

At a time when we as a society are trying to teach young minds that violence is not as option to resolving issues, such broadcasting is in direct conflict to this goal. NBC has a corporate broadcast effort ongoing to encourage young people to see that violence should not be an option to resolving issues. On the one hand, we have an admirable effort (by NBC), and then we have stations like WLS-TV encouraging violence as a solution. It is probable that many younger people and some adults are influenced by gratuitous broadcasting of hockey fighting on television, as exemplified by WLS-TV. Recently, there was a murder by a "hockey dad," and his actions may have been influenced by an assumption that violence is acceptable behaviour in the sport of hockey, on and off the ice. This assumption is given merit to viewers each time WLS-TV gratuitously broadcasts hockey fights, especially with an attempt to make such fights appear as "cute." Younger people especially may not realize that hockey fighting is used in professional hockey as a promotional tool to create interest in the sport.

We believe the broadcast license granted to WLS-TV does not give that station the right or privilege to offend the community standards and promote violence to young people as though it is a realistic solution to resolving issues. And their license also should not be a right or privilege to totally ignore potential, adverse effects of their broadcasting on younger people.

We strongly suggest WLS-TV (1) discontinue broadcasting of hockey fights